

COMPONENT FOOTWEAR SYSTEM

Field of the invention

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The present invention relates to footwear, and more particularly, to footwear that can be converted to accommodate different purposes.

Description of the prior art

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As with apparel, footwear is usually designed for the specific purpose for which it is to be used, which results in a great variety of footwear: dress shoes, casual shoes, sports shoes (of which there are further variations depending on the sport), sandals, etc. This results in a person having many different pairs of shoes for different requirements.

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Some people have been concerned with this, and have offered some solutions in terms of increasing the utility of a particular item of footwear. For example, reference may be made to US pat. no. 4,706,392, which teaches an interchangeable shoe and slipper combination.

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Other solutions have been directed to changing the appearance of the footwear itself, such as US patent application publication no. 2002/0174569 to Tsai, which teaches a shoe with interchangeable styles.

However, there are situations where the versatility of the footwear could be increased.

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For example, in the camping industry, hiking shoes are known which offer full support and full protection from the elements. As mentioned previously, sandals also exist which offer great ventilation and comfort. For many trips or expeditions, the need for at least these two pairs of footwear is required, in anticipation of the environmental and weather conditions. Carrying many different pairs of footwear increases the size and load that a traveler must carry, which can become a considerable burden, especially when luggage is hand- or back-carried.

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In order to respond to this specific problem, products exist that attempt to bridge two footwear needs in a same piece of footwear. One is a hiking sandal (as opposed to a shoe), allowing for great ventilation and having a rugged sole for grip. Another is a light hiking shoe, offering more support and protection.

5 While these products can touch upon all the functions for the different needs of a traveler, they represent compromises to having one piece of footwear dedicated to one set of environmental conditions. For example, hiking sandals will offer great ventilation but will be lacking support and protection for the foot.

10 **Summary of the invention**

It is an object of the present invention to provide a footwear component system which is more versatile. In accordance with the invention, this object is achieved with a component footwear system comprising:

15 a shoe comprising a sandal and a removable bootie,
 said sandal being provided with means for securing said sandal about a wearer's foot and including an outsole;
 said removable bootie being adapted to cover said wearer's foot and including a sole, said removable bootie being provided with means for securing
20 said bootie about said foot;
 said sandal and said bootie being configured to cooperate with each other so that when said bootie is inserted into said sandal and secured therein, said sandal and bootie combination results in said shoe, and wherein said sandal and said bootie can be worn independently.

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Brief description of the drawings

The present invention and its advantages will be more easily understood after reading the following non-restrictive description of preferred embodiments thereof, made with reference to the following drawings in which:

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Figures 1a to 6c are respectively side views of shoes, booties and sandals according to different embodiments of the present invention.

5 **Description of a preferred embodiment of the invention**

The present invention concerns a component footwear system which will protect a barefoot from the ground, is versatile in that it can be used in many different environments or situations, reduces the weight that a traveler must carry
10 and reduces the baggage that a traveler must carry.

Stated simply, the present invention provides for a shoe whose bootie, or upper, is removable, leaving behind a sandal. The sandal is adapted to be independently secured to a wearer's foot. The bootie on the other hand is adapted to cover a wearer's foot, and to be secured to the foot. The sandal and bootie are
15 further adapted to cooperate together to form the shoe when the bootie is inserted into the sandal.

Thus, the present invention provides footwear that is versatile in that the sandal and the bootie can be used independently or together as a shoe. The sandal provides an open-air, high ventilation piece of footwear, whereas the bootie
20 provides some form of protection, and the assembled shoe has all of the features of a traditional shoe, such as heel support, arch support, etc. The present invention provides for a three-in-one footwear component system that increases the versatility without the increased weight and size of three separate pieces of footwear.

It should be understood however, that the sandal, although preferably open-air, may also be a more closed component, again depending on the end use of the footwear component system.
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It will be understood by persons skilled in the art that reference is made herein only to the parts of footwear or shoes that are necessary for the understanding of the present invention, and that a detailed description of all of the
30 parts of footwear will not be presented herein. It will also be understood in the

present description that the expressions "footwear" and "shoe" are interchangeable, and encompass all types of shoes or footwear that can be covered by the teachings of the present invention. Furthermore, the expression "upper" and "bootie" are interchangeable, as will be seen hereinafter.

5 Referring now to the Figures, there is shown a component footwear system according to the present invention.

As mentioned previously, the present invention concerns a shoe which includes a sandal and a removable bootie.

The sandal 10 has a sole 13 that is adapted to meet the needs of the shoe.
10 As is typical in sandals, the sandal 10 of the present invention has a generally open top construction, an integral foot bed and is provided with means 11 for securing the sandal 10 to a wearer's foot. In a preferred embodiment of the invention, the means 11 for securing the sandal 10 to the wearer's foot include at least one adjustable strap, through clasps, buckles, Velcro™, etc. However, it will
15 be understood that different means are contemplated by the present invention, and could include laces, elastic bands, etc.

The sandal 10 is further provided with a heel portion 15 to provide some form of heel support. In this case, or independently, the sandal can also be provided with an ankle strap 17 or heel strap. The sandal also includes arch
20 support means integrally moulded to the insole.

The bootie 20 is adapted to cover a wearer's foot, and can advantageously cover the wearer's ankle.

The bootie 20 is provided with a sole 21 so that the bootie completely covers the wearer's foot. The sole is preferably shaped and sized to conform to
25 the bottom of the foot of the wearer, and is preferably made as thin as possible. Thus, the bootie 20 can be used as a slipper, for example, indoors, in an airplane or a vehicle. The thinness of the sole of the bootie is such that the assembled shoe is not too bulky, but means that in most cases, the bootie is not intended for more rugged use. However, this limitation may disappear with the use of different
30 materials and a different construction of the sole.

The bootie 20 may further include means 23 for securing the bootie to a wearer's foot, such as laces, adjustable straps, Velcro™, etc. Again, a variety of different means 23 can be used, and are within the scope of the present invention, and includes the bootie being made of a resilient material which envelops the foot of the wearer. The bootie 20 can be made of any material, but is preferably of a construction which is sturdy enough to provide for foot protection, and support.

As mentioned previously, the sandal 10 and bootie 20 cooperate together so that when the bootie is inserted into the sandal, the combination forms a shoe, thereby offering grip, foot support, lateral support, stability, ankle support and protection. The shoe, depending on its intended use and activity, may also provide flexibility, cushioning, etc.

In this respect, it may be advantageous to have the means for securing the sandal to a wearer's foot cooperate with corresponding grooves 31 or indentations on the outside of the bootie, as shown in Fig. 4. This reduces the overall bulk and size of the shoe, and may further secure the bootie within the sandal. It should be noted that the groove can also be obtained by using different materials, for example a thicker material for the bootie itself, and a mesh material where the groove is to be.

In this respect, the inside of the sandal is shaped and sized to receive the bootie in a snug manner. Consequently, the bootie and the sandal are adapted to engage each other to help prevent longitudinal and lateral movement. In some cases, the bootie and the sandal can further be provided with interlocking means to secure the bootie within the sandal.

When the bootie is inserted into the sandal, the means for securing the sandal to the foot of the wearer are thus used to secure the bootie to the sandal. In some embodiment, it may be advantageous to provide additional means to secure the bootie to the sandal.

Examples of the use of the shoe of the present invention include a hiker driving to destination wearing only the bootie. At destination, the hiker slips into the sandal in order to form the shoe for the hiking activity. After the activity, the hiker can remove the shoe and wear the sandal to let the foot breathe. Another example

includes an air traveler wearing the shoe to get to the airport. Once aboard the plane, the wearer removes the sandal and wears only the bootie. At destination, the shoe can be worn, or just the sandal.

5 It will also be appreciated that although the present invention is easily applicable to sports or activity shoes, the present invention is applicable to many different types of shoes, with the appropriate modifications.

Although the present invention has been explained hereinabove by way of a preferred embodiment thereof, it should be pointed out that any modifications to this preferred embodiment within the scope of the appended claims is not deemed
10 to alter or change the nature and scope of the present invention.